

“Common cultural action for refugees”

Dear Sir or Madam,

The recent arrival of refugees running away from the war or the insecurity in Syria, Afghanistan or other neighbouring countries, have highlighted our fellow citizens' various visions. We know that this issue will be discussed in our societies for the years to come and that we have to face major challenges.

La Chambre patronale des Employeurs permanents des Arts de la Scène de la F.W.B. d'expression française and its 21 members have decided « to do something together ». This means talking about something we worry about everyday. Our sector, the cultural sector, has been very silent about this topic. That is why we have launched this Common Cultural Action for refugees. The action will gather portraits (picture and account) of individuals with very different backgrounds but which allows us to have a global idea of this issue. These complex portraits echo current events but also bring forward persons who do not often appear in the media but who have been in our country for years.

Each portrait (twenty in total) represents one aspect of these stories which enable us to tackle the diversity of the issue without generalizing one overpowering opinion. The chamber appealed to the Belgian photographer **Gaël Turine** who has worked on documentary pieces. The portrait has become a photographic genre he explores and presents on a regular basis as a way to tackle an issue.

Cécile Lecuyer and Edith Bertholet, who have worked on the migration issue for several years, have been charged to gather accounts and coordinate the project. Each member of the chamber will present one portrait (picture and account) in their own structure. An exhibition with all the portraits will be organised in Flagey in January 2016 (to be confirmed), where the artwork will be sold in order to raise funds to support the associations.

Finally, each institution will be able to decide which direct actions to put into place inside their structure to welcome groups of refugees living in their region throughout the season.

More information on the project:

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In the middle of the controversy about what to do with the refugees fleeing the war, our cultural institutions have the duty to educate and warn the population. They have to work on two axes: they need to help people understand their part as human beings in the society and to think about past mistakes to avoid doing some today. Many of us want to resist peremptory judgements that are exacerbated by the media and communication technology. We do not have the time to think clearly anymore and these media spread every declaration, even the abhorrent ones, without any ethics or deontology.

The past have pushed millions of human beings to run away from death: they have left behind their stories and our artwork has enriched these memories which make part of our heritage even after being forgotten or destroyed. Today, we face the same phenomena which have driven all these refugees towards an unknown direction without any guarantee except immediate survival.

The 20th century experienced the most massive human migration in history, even more massive than the one we experience today. But at the time, we fought the causes as now we suffer the consequences without tackling the causes of this migration. Refugees reflect our blindness and that is why we are afraid of them. But they are not the ones we should be afraid of. We should rather fear the intolerance and selfishness that we are going to regret if we don't keep looking at the reality with an open human eye.

Our current Europe was built on this history and we cannot forget it today. A collective answer has never replaced an individual conscience. Let us keep listening to others and let us reach out "together" to those who resemble us and whose spot we could end up in tomorrow. This is our simple role and duty as humans.

ATELIER THEATRE JEAN VILAR, THEATRE DE LIEGE, THEATRE LE PUBLIC, ORCHESTRE

PHILHARMONIQUE ROYAL DE LIEGE, THEATRE DE NAMUR, ORCHESTRE ROYAL DE CHAMBRE DE WALLONIE, PIERRE DE LUNE –CENTRE DRAMATIQUE JEUNE PUBLIC DE BRUXELLES, THEATRE LES TANNEURS, THEATRE ROYAL DES GALERIES, LA COMEDIE CLAUDE VOLTER, OPERA ROYAL DE WALLONIE, LA MAISON

EPHEMERE - COMPAGNIE THÉÂTRALE, LES BALADINS DU MIROIR, THEATRE ROYAL DU PARC, CHARLEROI / DANSES, THEATRE DE L'EVEIL, FLAGEY Asbl, LA FABRIQUE

DE THEATRE, DEL DIFFUSION asbl, PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS DE CHARLEROI, THEATRE DE POCHE

COORDINATORS:

Edith Bertholet and Cécile Lecuyer have worked for several years now on the migration theme, either through shows about the issue or through logistic and human support brought to groups of refugees living in Belgium.

Edith Bertholet and Cécile Lecuyer are also the coordinators of the Halte in Liège, a new creation and broadcast laboratory. Moreover, both of them are involved in numerous artistic projects.

PHOTOGRAPHER:

Since the beginning of his career, **Gaël Turine** has worked as a photographer mostly on documentary documents. His projects have led him to publish testimonies, queries and information through press, books, websites and exhibitions on social, economical and political topics. He was first taking care of orders but portraits have become for a few years a photographic genre which Gaël Turine explores regularly to introduce a topic.

Gaël Turine is the author of several books, among which *Aveuglement* (Photo Poche) about a co-op for blind persons in West Africa. In 2004, after staying a few times in Afghanistan, he published *Avoir 20 ans à Kaboul*. A long collaboration between him and the paediatric oncologist Eric Sariban led to the publication of the book *Aujourd'hui c'est demain* (Delpire Editeur). In 2005, he began to work on voodoo cult through a travel the last photos of which date from August 2010. The book *Voodoo* was published in January 2011. His work on portraits of “outsider” artists was exhibited in the Art & Marges museum in Brussels in 2012. The same year, he initiated his work on the Indian-Bangladeshi border who resulted in the publication of the book *Le mur et la peur* (Photo Poche) in 2014. He has also contributed to numerous collective books. While working on orders from magazines (section Travel, Society, Portrait,...), Gaël Turine has realised many pieces for cultural and social institutions. His work is shown in galleries, museums and festivals. His stories are published in the international press. He has received awards and scholarships in Europe and the United States. Since he has begun his career, he has been working with NGOs. Gaël Turine also organizes training courses about documentary photography in numerous countries. His is a member of the VU agency.

Calendar:

From October to November 2015: Gathering of the accounts and portraits

From October to November 2015: Each member of the chamber presents temporarily a portrait among their institution.

January 2016: An exhibition gathering all the portraits is organized in Flagey, during which the sell of the artwork will allow us to raise funds to support the undocumented migrants on a daily basis.

Throughout the whole season 2015-2016: This subject is the cultural institutions' main focus. For example, clothes and food will be collected, debates and conferences will be organized, a support will be offered for the children's homework, workshops for adults will be set up, free visits will be organized in some locations, free seats will be offered for shows, etc.